

1947: AN ORDEAL OF PARTITION IN VARIOUS NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi called the traumatic experience of partition “the vivisection of India”. The partition of India is the most cataclysmic event in the history of the Twentieth century. The contemporary culture, literary pieces, history and historiography are deeply affected by partition. The impact left on the minds of those who witnessed those excruciating times persists until today. Never before or since have so many people exchanged their homes and countries so quickly. In a very short span, about twelve million people moved between the new truncated India and the newly created Pakistan. Their movement was sometimes accompanied and sometimes instigated by extermination. Many starved and many died of deadly diseases. About 75,000 women are believed to have been abducted and raped by men of both their as well as different religion. Thousands of families were divided, destroyed and abandoned. The emotional pain of being separated from home, family and friendships is by its nature immeasurable. More than sixty years have passed but the partition remains unrequited in the historical experience of the sub-continent.

KEYWORDS: Partition of India, Trauma of Partition, Migration & Refugees

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INTRODUCTION

The agony of partition has stirred the sensibility of many writers and novelists inspiring them to write poems, short stories, novels and dramas. There is no dearth on the material available on the theme of partition. Till date it motivates men of literature to write, and film producers to produce films and television serials. The trauma and upheaval of partition have stirred the creative genius of many writers such as Khushwant Singh, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal, Salman Rushdie, Attia Hossain, Bapsi Sidhwa, Nanak Singh, Kartar Singh Duggal, Amrita Pritam, Gurcharan Das, Yashpal, Bhisham Sahni, Saadat Hasan Manto, Amitav Ghosh, Qurratulain Hyder and many more. These writers directly dealt with the holocaust of the partition in their writings. In fact many of them were both the eyewitness and victim of this calamity. Celebrated American photographer Margaret Bourke-White wrote,

“It was a rare event in the history of nations: the birth of twins- India and Pakistan. It was a birth accompanied by strife and suffering.”

Train To Pakistan (1956)

It is surprising that no novel in English by an Indian about partition was written until 1956, when ‘Train To Pakistan’ was first published. Khushwant Singh’s novel Train To Pakistan is a vivid description of partition. Singh himself was a witness to the traumatic holocaust that followed the horrors of the war. The novel presents the dark truth of partition era. It is the tale of the commotion faced by the residents of village Mano Majra in Punjab on the Indo-Pak border. The author describes the clear picture of the atmosphere prevailing in the village;

“The summer of 1947 was not like other India summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. It was hotter than usual, and drier and dustier. And the summer was longer.”

Singh aptly describes the accounts of the massacres of Hindus and Muslims. He makes his readers understand the event by assessing various groups of people existing in that time and place. At the same time, Singh asserts the fact that the Hindus and Muslims were equally responsible and the blame could not be placed on any one group:

“Muslims said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped.”

Trains packed of dead bodies of men, women, children and oldies arrived at border station of both the countries. These events lead to massacres between Hindus and Muslims. As a result hundreds and thousands of people were killed in this turbulence that followed in the communal riots of 1947. Singh's novel is the bitter account of barbarism and grimy reality of division that came to us in the form of Independence. In this way Singh showed the harsh time of partition in his novel.

Tamas (1974)

Tamas (Darkness) by Bhisham Sahni is a powerful account of the 1947 riots that took place in Pakistan preceding the partition of India. Govind Nihalani states;

“Tamas is the reflective response to the partition of India- one of the most tragic events in the recent history of the Indian sub-continent.”

The novel depicts how communal violence was generated by fundamentalists and extremists in both communities and how innocent people have to pay for this generation that infuse tension and hatred between them. The events described in Tamas are based on true account of the riots of 1947 that Sahni was a witness to in Rawalpindi. Sahni has unveiled the dirty game of the politicians who spread tension and hatred between various sects of people leading to horrible and frightful consequences. The author brings before us the story of Nathu, a sweeper by profession who is bribed and deceived by a local Muslim politician to kill a pig for veterinary purpose. Sahni narrates the tension erupted by discovering the carcass of pig on the steps of the mosque. Enraged Muslims killed scores of Hindu and Sikhs who in turn kill every Muslim they find. In the second part of the novel, aged Sikh Harnam Singh and his wife Banto becomes the victim of the frenzy of communalism. They are attacked by Muslims, their house is set on fire and their son is forcibly converted from Iqbal Singh to Iqbal Ali. The fear of molestation stirred Sikh woman's including Harnam Singh's daughter to give up their lives by jumping into a well.

Sahni gives a clear picture of the policies of the religious leaders to make their place stronger and safer. They tried to divert the people whether Hindu Muslim or Sikh towards killing as a weapon for self defense.

Azadi (1975)

Azadi by Chaman Nahal portrays the problem of refugees who were forced to flee from Pakistan and India. Like Khushwant Singh, he himself witnessed the traumatic sufferings committed on the people after the announcement of partition. The novel deals with the horrors of partition and the holocaust created by the riots and its effect on the lives of the people living in the border town of Sialkot. The author narrates the picture of Hindu family and its struggle during partition. It also portrays the love of a Hindu boy and a Muslim girl. Nahal tells the shocking experience of partition

through the character of Lala Kanshi Ram. Kanshi Ram's whole world is shattered by the creation of Pakistan due to which his migration to India along with his family is the saddest thing ever happened to him. The first scene brings out the announcement of Viceroy on All India Radio:

“It was the third of June, 1947. This evening, the Viceroy was to make an important announcement.”

This announcement puts an end to all his beliefs, happiness and speculations. He sorrowfully exclaims;

“Everything will be ruined if Pakistan is created”

Lala is worried of the fate of four hundred million people. He is tensed if Pakistan is handed over to Jinnah. Nahal through his portrayal of Lala and his wife Prabha Rani, presents the painstaking dilemma of partition. The division of the novel in three parts, “Lull” “Storm” and “Aftermath” makes it clear that the book is about the silent atmosphere before the announcement of partition, the horrible incidents caused by partition and the pitiable conditions of the uprooted refugees after the partition.

Ice-Candy Man (1988)

The most prominent Pakistani novelist Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-candy Man* (*Cracking India*) deals with the bloody partition of India through the eyes of the child protagonist Lenny growing up in a Parsee family, surviving through female bonding and rebellion. Lenny is in fact reminiscent of the author's own childhood. Like Lenny, Sidhwa too suffered from polio as a child due to which she frequently visited hospitals instead of going to school. Sidhwa like Lenny was an eight year old girl living in Lahore at the time of partition. In the course of novel, Lenny's eighteen year old Hindu Ayah, Shanta, who takes her in the evenings to the park attracts several admirers including the Ice-candy man. Ice-candy man is the titular hero of the novel who turns out to be an anti-hero in the end. His transition is observed by Lenny through the roles of the ice-cream vendor, bird-seller and pimp. Lenny's young household does break apart when her Ayah is abducted and gang raped. After that Ice-candy man marries her. All these events forces her into the life of prostitution.

Thus Sidhwa's dark and sordid tale of partition has turned into a powerful truth telling narrative. She has included all caste of characters- Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Sikh and Parsee. She has portrayed men as perpetrators of dreadful outrage and women as victims of this rage.

Guzra Hua Zamana (1994)

Krishna Baldev Vaid, the famous Hindi writer wrote “*Guzra Hua Zamana*” (*The Broken Mirror*), full of horrible experiences of partition. Vaid survived the horrifying carnage that accompanied the partition of the Indian sub continent which he describes is his most traumatic existential experience. He narrates the eve of partition through the eyes of Beero, a village boy in western Punjab. The novel opens with the scene of broken mirror. The book is full of conflicts arising between Hindu and Muslim, communal riots and the demand of separate nation i.e Pakistan. The novel is full of haunting allegorical images like the Blue Mosque at the end of the prostitute's alley, and Beero who wishes to be the imam of the mosque. He awaits his death shivering before the blood-cries of the mob expressing his desire to be muezzin of the Blue Mosque. The symbol of broken mirror symbolizes the upcoming separation of nations. Indian culture visualizes broken mirror as bad luck. Unbroken mirror is symbol of happiness and peace whereas the broken mirror symbolizes separation, division and partition.

In the first scene, whenever the mirror was broken by Beero as his father returns to his shrew of a wife, conjuring

the superstition of bad luck in his family. Beero's sister Devi jumps into well to save her honour. At that time Hindus don't allow Muslims to jump in and save her because the well would get polluted. Beero's journey to Lahore witnesses the Hindus and Muslims who spew venom at each other creating violence and disaster.

Kitne Pakistan (2000)

Kitne Pakistan (How Many Pakistan) is a powerful Hindi novel by Kamleshwar. The novel depicts the struggle and pain of separation during partition in 1947. Kamleshwar follows the technique of allegory and realism in his novel. The author vividly examines the nature and futility of divisive politics and religion. He successfully creates a fictional court where different historical characters are brought to witness's box and asked to narrate their version of history. All the allegorical characters are accused of splitting of nations, leaving a never ending trail of hatred and mistrust. At the same time the book presents the love story of Adeeb and Salma. Due to partition, Salma is separated from her lover as she has to flee to newly created Pakistan. This new Pakistan becomes a barrier between two lovers. The novel takes time as a great healer as a protagonist in the partition of country. Kamleshwar shows the traumatic event of partition that stands for loss, destruction of life, deteriorating values, separation and death. The novel gives a painful description of the process of creating of more Pakistans that results in terrorism and never ending havoc.

Toba Tek Singh (2011)

Saadat Hasan Manto, the famous Urdu writer wrote the short story "Toba Tek Singh" that reveals the writer's psychological state of mind. Like many others, he too was a witness to this terrible calamity and left Bombay for Lahore along with his wife and family. The story is a painful satire and also a bitter indictment on the relationship between India and Pakistan. It follows the inmates in a Lahore asylum including the old Sikh Bishen Singh also called Toba tek singh whom are to be transferred to India following the independence of 1947. Both the government has decided to send the inmates to their proper country (Muslims to Pakistan, Hindu and Sikhs to India). Bishen Singh wants to be neither in India nor in Pakistan but in his village- Toba Tek Singh- to which he belongs. When Bishen Singh is sent to India, but being told that his hometown is in Pakistan, he refuses to go. The story ends with Bishen Singh lying down in no man's land between the two barbed wire fences;

"There, behind barbed wire, was Hindustan. Here, behind the same kind of barbed wire, was Pakistan. In between, on that piece of ground that had no name, lay toba tek singh"

Manto narrates the pain and grief of the millions of people like Bishen Singh who were forced to leave their homes and give their life a new beginning.

Pinjar (1950)

Amrita Pritam, the well known Punjabi poet is the only feminine voice viewing partition from a woman's perspective. She is best remembered for her elegy on the partition, Ajj Akhan Waris Shah Nu (Ode to Waris Shah) the most poignant of all her works. Amrita too was both the eyewitness and victim to the horrors of partition. Her memorable work Pinjar (The Skeleton) is based on the partition. It is the story of a Hindu girl Puro, abducted by a Muslim boy Rashid. Her parents refused to recover a 'defiled' girl. Unable to resist the circumstances she was thrown into, Puro marries Rashid and bears him a son.

Speaking of the novel, Amrita's partner Imroz says;

“It was very radical. A muslim boy abducts a hindu girl and she chooses to remain with him rather than be rehabilitated in India after partition. It was a saga of love of a couple thrown in a situation not of their making, but they rise above the situation with love and caring.”

Amrita puts light upon the problems faced by women during the time of partition. She is the representative of the entire womanhood who sowed the seeds of the things that were wrong and unjust. Throughout her life Amrita has been a symbol of liberation for contemporary women writers.

Aadha Gaon (1966)

In the novel named "Adha Gaon" (A Village Divided), Razi Masoom Raza narrates the story of two opposite landlord Muslim families of village Gangauli and their rivalry, life style, concerns, at the time when India was gaining independence. Raza offers an insight into the world of a largely Shia muslim village who is heavily scarred of partition. Raza like Nahal himself is worried as he states;

“I Saiyid Masoom Raza Abidi... am deeply worried. I am constantly asking myself where I belong “Azamgarh or Ghazipur?”

People of Gangauli are deeply worried like Raza when confronted with partition. Some are baffled at the idea of partition while some are glad of splitting of the village into two halves as Aadha Gaon. Many of them can hardly believe the notion of dividing India. The novel depicts the pain and suffering of the consequences of the partition. Raza shows the effect the partition had on Hindu-Muslim relationship that were earlier like brothers sharing same land, water and air. Before division, Hindus and Muslims had lived in harmony. They have together performed all the rituals, ceremonies, worshipping of god, goddesses of both the religion. The partition has thus badly affected the Gangaulians at both personal and emotional level. It is not only the division of nations but also the division of their hearts, languages and traditions.

Jhutha Sach (1958-60)

Jhutha Sach is a powerful tale of human suffering written about partition. Following a family from their roots in a gali, or lane in the city of Lahore to a new life in the cities of north india, Yashpal's novel revolves around the world-changing event i.e the partition. The novel's central characters are two siblings, Jaidev and Tara Puri who live in a small Hindu community lane called Bhola Pandhe's Gali. Puri, an idealistic young writer and journalistic and Tara, a college student both are living a comfortable life aspiring to achieve their dreams. But all their hopes and dreams are shattered when compared to the crises that demanded Britishers to flee and led to subsequent division of India Both Jaidev and Tara are thrust out into the world- they are forced to bear the violence and derangement of partition upon their bodies, apparently helpless and brutalized, who slowly gathers strength to face the calamity.

Raj Gill's **The Rape** (1974) opens in 1947 in a village in West Punjab, now a part of Pakistan, where Dalipjit, a sikh boy rapes Leila, a Muslim girl whom Dalipjit's father has already molested. H.S. Gill's **Ashes and Petals** (1978) is the most thought provoking aspect of partition- killing of young girls by their fathers as being attacked by the extremists. **Twice Born Twice Dead** (1979) by Kartar Singh Duggal is a powerful novel, a cry of compassion, in the wake of massacre.

A Fine Family (1990) by Gurcharan Das is a multigenerational saga lived in the times of partition. It traces the lives of ordinary people like the proud lawyer, Lala Dewan Chand. He is forced to migrate like many non-muslim indians

when violence breaks out in Lyallpur. Like many other unfortunate people with similar experience, Lala too gives his life a fresh start in free India. His daughter, Tara, who prefers to work as a school teacher is half heartedly married to a man of Lala's choice. His only nephew is lost to the freedom movement that blunt all his sensibilities.

Another prominent voice Shauna Singh Baldwin's debut novel **What the Body Remembers** (2000) is full of tragical scenes of the Indian partition. The novel depicts the cracking of Sikh community in 1947. It traces the conflicts faced by women during partition. It is the struggle between the man and his two wives, cast in opposition to each other. Sardarji, the patriarchal conqueror who divides and rules Roop and Satya, is the manifestation of the imperial conqueror, who divides and rules the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh nationalities eventually creating India and Pakistan.

Amit Majmudar's debut novel **Partitions** (2011) is about the violent upheaval that occurred during 1947 partition. It is all about three separate journeys of Hindu twins, a Muslim doctor and an adolescent Sikh girl. All are the victims of partition that has dismantled their world. Shankar and Keshav, the twins lose sight of their mother when struggling to board the last train to Delhi. At the same time, an elderly Muslim doctor, Ibrahim Masud is making his journey to his new homeland, Pakistan. Sikh young girl, Simran Kaur flees as his father is determined to kill her and her mother rather than being raped by the Muslims. The writer has excelled in every aspect of narrative giving us the true account of the agony and trauma of division.

Basti (2012) the wonderful novel by Intizar Husain, is the finest tale of the tensed period in Pakistani history. The story centres around the protagonist, Zakir, his childhood in the village of Rupnagar, India. Life changes all of a sudden when Zakir and his family have to migrate to Pakistan at the time of the partition. Zakir's childhood friend Sabirah is the only one to remain in India after the division, while all her family members even Zakir moves to Pakistan. Sabirah continues to haunt Zakir's mind. He thinks of her very often, wants to meet her, discuss the things but could not because of many years of separation.

Basti is a novel of creating distances between Lahore(Zakir) and Rupnagar (Sabirah). Partition fills alienation and emptiness in the life of Zakir. The novel is a blend of past and present in the most artistic manner

Lost Generations: A historical novel (2013) by Manjit Sachdeva is a fine example of partition saga. The writer narrates autobiographical events in the novel as he and his family become refugee at the time of partition. They stayed fifteen years in refugee headquarters in Allahabad. In the same way, the novel is a tragi-comic narrative of a well off Sikh family forced out of Rawalpindi during the partition of Punjab in 1947. The author depicts the family's struggle and partial rehabilitation as they settle in Delhi attempting to keep up the appearances of their affluent past and preserve their old mores. Eventually they face destruction, destitution and an uncertain future once again in 1984. It is a compelling story of racism, sexism, corruption, exploitation and materialism

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, all these novels are an account of sweeping, shattering chronicles of the gigantic upheaval and displacement that accompanied the partition and Independence in 1947 Indian subcontinent. All these novels may rightly be taken as the rare tragic narratives in the Indian English fiction. The tragedy is intensely felt and poignant where the narrative pattern is constantly moving, dignified and enthralling. These prominent novelists have succeeded through revolved limitation and vigorous selection in communication, a hint of the grossness, ghastliness and total insanity of the two nation theory and the partition tragedy.

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